

CALIFORNIA

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

DESKTOP PUBLISHING SPECIALISTS

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INTEREST AREA
ARTISTIC



WHAT DOES A DESKTOP PUBLISHING SPECIALIST DO?

DESKTOP PUBLISHING (DTP) SPECIALISTS use personal computer software, a variety of data sources, and their own artistic ability to produce readable, clear, and attractive publication masters. These masters are later printed by traditional methods or are converted into electronic formats.

Desktop Publishing Specialists create such documents as reports, brochures, instruction manuals, magazines, books, tickets, cards, newsletters, advertisements, and forms. In some companies, graphic designers may supervise these workers, while other DTP Specialists apply their knowledge of graphic art to complete the job unsupervised. They are sometimes called Electronic Pagination System Workers, Electronic Publishers, or Layout Artists.

Desktop publishing is quickly replacing the prepress work done by compositors, typesetters, and page layout workers. Its advantages include lower cost of production, in-house control for updating and editing products, and speed of production.

The introduction of Postscript language and PageMaker software in the 1980's integrated text and graphics, and created the ability to compose and preview the printed page for the first time. Since then, hundreds of DTP software programs have become available.

Increasingly, DTP Specialists are responsible for making the publication master "web ready." Because of this trend, DTP Specialists often need knowledge of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and Portable Document Format (PDF) to convert documents from print to electronic format. When these tasks are included in the job requirements, workers may be called Electronic Publishers.

The following tasks are common for Desktop Publishing Specialists:

- Study work requests and other instructions to determine work to be done and plan a sequence of operations.
- Views monitors for visual representation of work in progress and for instructions and feedback throughout process.
- Enters data, such as background color, shapes, and coordinates of images; and retrieves data from system memory.
- Activates options, such as masking, pixel (picture element) editing, airbrushing, or image retouching.
- Enters digitized data into electronic prepress system computer memory, using scanner, camera, keyboard, or mouse.

- Provide visual drafts of work in progress to graphic designer or customer throughout the process, making modifications to suit customer needs.
- Apply knowledge of layout, design, typography, and graphic art to select and assemble elements of publication, including type styles, fonts, formats, photographs, and graphics.
- Edit graphics and photos using pixel or bitmap (picture element) editing, airbrushing, or image retouching. May add elements such as sound or animation to electronic publications. May convert document to an online hyperlink document.
- Enter data, such as coordinates of images and color specifications, into system to retouch and make color corrections. Select number of colors and determine color separations.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Desktop Publishing Specialists need the following skills, knowledge, and abilities when doing their day-to-day tasks:

- Visualization – Ability to imagine how something will look after it is moved around or when its parts are moved or rearranged.
- Reading Comprehension – Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
- Visual Color Discrimination – Ability to match or detect differences between colors, including shades of color and brightness.
- Operations Analysis – Analyzing needs and product requirements to create a design.
- Monitoring – Assessing how well one is doing when learning or doing something.
- Equipment Selection – Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- Near Vision – The ability to see details of objects at a close range.
- Wrist-Finger Speed – The ability to make fast, simple, repeated movements of the fingers, hands, and wrists.
- Computers and Electronics – Knowledge of computer hardware and software, including applications and programming.

People who like work activities that deal with the artistic side of things, who understand design concepts, and who like practical, hands-on problems and solutions will like this work.

WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Desktop Publishing Specialists work in a climate-controlled open area or cubicle at computer workstations. Freelance or telecommuting opportunities may make home DTP work a practical option. They use computers for extended periods of time, which can strain eyes and tendons if regular breaks are not taken. In addition, DTP Specialists frequently work under the pressure of deadlines.

Union Membership

Most of these workers are not union represented in California except in government agencies. Some who work in the printing and graphic design industries are represented by the Graphic Communications International Union.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division:

Estimated number of workers in 1998:	2,400
Estimated number of workers in 2008:	4,700
Projected Growth 1998-2008:	95.8%
Est. openings due to separations by 2008:	600
<i>These figures do not include self-employment.</i>	

These figures represent the occupational group, Electronic Pagination Systems Workers, often called Desktop Publishing Specialists.

Desktop Publishing Specialist employment is expected to grow much faster than average for all occupations. This is one of the fastest growing occupations in California with 2,900 new and replacement openings expected in the 1998-2008 period.

Trends

As desktop publishing software becomes cheaper, more flexible, and easier to use, more industries (in addition to printing and prepress service firms) are

expected to hire in-house Desktop Publishing workers. In some cases, simply retraining existing employees such as writers, graphic artists, and public relations specialists will fill these “new” positions.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Desktop Publishers 2001 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$13.08	to	\$21.87
Average hourly wage	\$18.19		
Average annual wage	\$37,839		

Source: *Occupational Employment Survey of Employers* by EDD/LMID.

Desktop Publishing Specialists who format documents for electronic media draw the highest salaries in this field.

Hours

Desktop Publishing Specialists work a variety of shifts to meet deadlines. Some employers offer flexible hours, telecommuting, and part-time work, while others require work done on a more traditional 40-hour weekly schedule.

Benefits

Benefits for full-time workers generally include medical, dental, and vacation leave.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

Education and Training

California community colleges, colleges and universities, extension programs, and private vocational schools offer a variety of classes, workshops and certificate programs in desktop publishing, graphic communication, and electronic publishing. Programs range from four-month regional occupational programs (ROP) in school districts to two-year graphic design programs in community colleges. The DTP Specialist occupation does not require a bachelor's degree; however, some workers in the field have a graphic arts background and may have completed part or all of a four-year graphic design program in a college or university.

On-the-job training is possible for some workers in companies that have a large publications staff with graphic artists and designers. Persons wishing to gain experience and add products to their portfolio are encouraged to produce brochures or newsletters for church, school, or community-based organizations on a volunteer basis. Recommended preparatory high school courses include keyboarding, journalism, art, English, graphics, and computer software training.

Licensing and Certification

There are no official licenses or certificates required for Desktop Publishing Specialists.

Continuing Education

Nowhere does the phrase “life-long learning” have more meaning than in desktop publishing. These workers must keep pace with the new software developments by taking workshops or independently learning new software programs.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Like commercial and fine artists, the “proof is in the portfolio” for DTP Specialists. Applicants for job openings must be prepared to show samples of their work to the interviewing employer. Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under Desktop Publishing, Service Bureaus, Computer Graphics, Computer Multimedia, Printers and Computer Graphics, and Publishers.

In addition to prepress companies and service bureaus that act as intermediaries between clients and printing companies, many large firms hire in-house DTP Specialists, particularly in the health, finance, entertainment, lodging, education, and insurance industries. Many candidates for DTP jobs maintain a personal Web site for employers to view their portfolio and employment history.

California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov.

Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

With increased knowledge and experience, workers in large firms can move from basic DTP tasks to those with greater responsibilities, such as leading a major publication project through all the steps from design concept to print distribution. Some of these workers leave firms to start their own companies and become consultants to business, industry, or government. Others with an interest, the talent, and further education may turn to careers in graphic design or commercial art.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Graphic Communications International Union
1900 L St. NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 462-1400
Fax: (202) 721-0600
www.gciu.org

Employment Projections by Occupation
www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm

Employment and Wages by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Commercial Artists	No. 4
Commercial Printing Press Operators	No. 71
Copywriters	No. 163
Editors	No. 268
Public Relations Representatives	No. 276
Web Page Designers and Webmasters	No. 559

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (<i>Standard Occupational Classification</i>)	
Desktop Publishers	43-9031
O*NET (<i>Occupational Information Network</i>)	
Desktop Publishers	43-9031.00
OES (<i>Occupational Employment Statistics</i>)	
Electronic Pagination System Operators	89707
DOT (<i>Dictionary of Occupational Titles</i>)	
Phototypesetter Operator	
(print & pub.)	650.582-022
Compositor	
(print. & pub.)	973.381-010
Electronic Prepress	
System Operator	979.282-010
Computer Typesetter-Keyliner	
(print. & pub.)	979.382-026